



(U) The Only Game in Town (part 2)

FROM: [REDACTED]
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Run Date: 12/16/2004

Here's part 2 (and final) of [REDACTED] story of her tdy to Islamabad. (S)

(U//FOUO) Despite the long hours we all put in at the Embassy, there was time for some shopping, dining out, and a little bit of sightseeing. While Pakistan remains a high-threat environment, as evidenced by the recent explosion at the Marriott Hotel, I still maintained a semi-normal lifestyle that wasn't confined to the Embassy grounds. I frequented many shops in Islamabad where you could buy everything from Persian carpets, glass bracelets, spice boxes, and hand-carved woodwork to the very latest American DVDs, which were all at considerably lower prices. The shop owners, and the MANY street vendors, were always anxious to sell to Americans, so there was no shortage of goods being offered at every corner.



(U) Women selling glass bracelets at an outdoor market in Islamabad.



(U) Carpet shopping in Islamabad with fellow TDYer [REDACTED]

(U//FOUO) If work at the Embassy was finished early enough, there were many dinner options in the city. The Marriott Hotel alone had five restaurants that included Chinese, Japanese, and Thai cuisine. There was even a Pizza Hut and ice cream parlor that served food comparable to that found in the US. It's definitely one of the few places I've been to where you can get a steak dinner with two side dishes for about \$4.00, although its inevitable that you will eventually get sick no matter where you choose to eat.

(U//FOUO) Additionally, I wanted to share a few of the more memorable experiences I had during my TDY:

- Visiting the neighboring town of Taxila and getting a flat tire that we had to change in a crowded parking lot.
- Touring Murree and riding on a probably-not-so-safe chairlift down the side of a mountain.
- Riding on a camel in a very decrepit, run-down zoo, which charged an admission price of around \$.10.
- Going running almost every day at 13:00, in 100-120 degree heat, with everyone I pass yelling that I'm absolutely crazy to be doing anything outside.
- Eating dinner at the "Chicken Shack," which requires considerable faith in both the drive up the winding road and the cooking.
- Haggling over the price of something already cheap, with



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someone who can't speak English, just because it's expected and fun.

- Driving on the left hand side of the road, with the steering wheel on the right hand side of the car, in a place where there are practically "no rules," and trying to avoid the countless number of people and even donkeys loitering in the street.

(S//SI) Station Islamabad is one of the most exciting, challenging, and fast-paced locations to work in the world, with everyone putting in lots of overtime and weekend hours to accommodate for the dynamic environment. It is one of the few places where you can truly experience your surroundings while seeing the fruits of your counterterrorism efforts on a daily basis. I would recommend that anyone looking for an exhilarating tour where they can see SIGINT, HUMINT, and IMINT in action give serious consideration to an assignment here.



(U) The Faisal Mosque in Islamabad is the second-largest mosque in the world.

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